

## COVER STORY

## New VAP Cholesterol Test Puts Bruce Begley on Road to a Healthier Life

"I've known for several years that I had high blood pressure and high cholesterol levels. I was put on blood pressure medicine awhile back but thought I could lower my cholesterol with diet and exercise."

However, a stressful lifestyle as Executive Director of Methodist Hospital, filled with lots of lunch and dinner meetings led Bruce Begley to put on 20 to 30 pounds instead of take them off.

"I had really started thinking about losing weight and getting in shape again," he says, "but didn't want to start any kind of program until going back to Dr. Sheth (cardiologist on Methodist's staff)." The sudden cardiac-related death of Director of Nursing Dave Luttrull in September, 2002, had also given him pause. "I started thinking about that, too, and how my own family history was filled with heart problems." Begley's father died of a heart attack during surgery for an aneurysm at age 60, and so did his grandfather. His mother, 72, has had quadruple bypass surgery, and currently doing well.

Before he'd had a chance to see Dr. Sheth, Begley attended a Continuing Medical Education lunch meeting on a new laboratory test being introduced at Methodist, called the Vertical Auto Profile or VAP test, for short. Dr. Primilina Corpus, the Lab's Chief Pathologist and Medical Director, asked for volunteers attending the meeting to take the test.

"We needed some test examples to send away for results," Dr. Corpus explains, "which would be back within 7-10 days."

"When Dr. Corpus called my office and said she wanted to make an 'office call', I wasn't sure what she wanted," Begley recalls. "She came up and said she had the results of my VAP test, and showed me I was at high risk for heart disease and needed to have things checked out."

During an office visit and consultation with Dr. Sheth, a couple of options were presented. "He showed some concern with the test results and suggested doing either a stress test or a cardiac catheterization," Begley explains. "I had a thalium stress test two years ago and had a good result, so we decided to proceed with the cardiac cath." "At that point, I really wanted to know if there was a problem,"

The following day, the procedure was performed in Methodist Hospital's Cardiac Cath Lab.

The catheterization revealed significant blockage in two arteries—one 80% blocked and another 50% blocked.

The next recommended step was to perform a special procedure called an angioplasty and to insert a stent into the artery with the greatest blockage to keep it open. "Later that same day I was transferred by ambulance to St. Mary's in Evansville (While cardiac catheterization

is performed at Methodist, angioplasties and other heart procedures are not currently available here.) "The procedure successfully opened the blocked artery," Dr. Mohit Sheth says, "and the results of a follow-up stress test were good."

"I'm on cholesterol medicine and three other medications now," Begley says, "and have started to do some walking with my wife, Barbara, around the neighborhood."

He also coaches youth basketball and tries to incorporate a little running and passing the ball with the 12-year-olds on his team.

"I suspected something might be wrong before I got confirmation of it," Begley says as he looks back on his experience. "I would get a burning in my chest sometimes, especially when I was walking in cold weather."

Begley also had a cardiac scoring exam in June 2002 — a special type of scan utilizing our CT scanner, which can detect areas of calcification (hardened plaque) in the arteries surrounding the heart. "Mine showed some minor calcified plaque, but nothing that indicated further testing was needed."

"I think if you're honest with yourself, most people know when something is just not right with them healthwise. What I'd like to say to everyone reading this is if you know you have a risk factor

for heart disease or a history of it in your family, take this new type of cholesterol test. It's quick, easy, and can give some vital information that can save your life.

"It's more complete than the standard cholesterol test and I'm glad we now have it here. If you are like I was and need to lose weight and exercise, check your numbers first on this test. See your doctor and ask him to order it. It's well worth it."



*In the months which have followed Bruce Begley's diagnosis and procedure to open his blocked artery, he has lost 15 pounds and is exercising regularly. He is pictured walking in downtown Henderson's Audubon Mill Park with his wife, Barbara.*

## About the New VAP (Vertical Auto Profile) Cholesterol Test for Coronary Risk Assessment

*The Vertical Auto Profile (VAP) Test, now available at Methodist Hospital, has brought a new standard of care in coronary risk assessment to our area. The blood test identifies 90% of people threatened with heart disease rather than the 40% shown to be at risk by the standard screening test for cholesterol.*

*The VAP Test identifies not only triglycerides, HDL and LDL levels shown by traditional blood tests, but the 21 blood subfractions that compose those readings. Invented by scientists at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, the test allows physicians to target the specific blood lipid that is contributing to heart disease, as well as identify those who weren't shown to be at risk by the traditional test.*

*"Previously," says Primilina Corpus, MD, Director of Pathology Services at Methodist, "doctors who wanted such precision would have needed several tests at a cost of hundreds of dollars." She goes on to explain, "A patient with normal lev-*

*els of LDL, the low-density lipoproteins known as bad cholesterol, is not safe from heart disease if nearly all of the LDLs are of a sort known as lipoprotein (a), or Lp(a).*

*A patient with high levels of Lp(a) has twice the risk of heart attack; add in other risk factors and the risk of heart attack increases greatly."*

*Routine cholesterol tests measure total cholesterol, HDL (high-density lipoprotein, or "good" cholesterol), and triglycerides, and calculate LDL (low-density lipoprotein, or "bad" cholesterol). The VAP Test expands on this information by measuring other important cholesterol subclasses, plus hereditary factors such as Lp(a), also known as "the widow maker."*

*The VAP test has been available commercially for a little more than two years, but is currently available in the tri-county area only at Methodist Hospital. The price of the VAP Test is comparable to routine cholesterol tests and is reimbursed by most insurance carriers and Medicare.*